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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN, U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their news coverage August 11-13 on the arrangement for President Chen Shui-bian to stop over Anchorage, Alaska, when he visits Central America August 20; DPP Presidential candidate Frank Hsieh's announcement that he will ask former Premier Su Tseng-chang to be his running mate; pig farmers' protest against an alleged government move to lift the ban on ractopamine; and the global market turmoil caused by U.S. sub-prime mortgage market woes.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" said in an editorial that the transit arrangements for President Chen Shui-bian's Central America visit next week are a barometer for U.S.-Taiwan relations. The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" emphasized the referendum right of the Taiwan people in its editorial. An editorial of the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" urged the United States to be more alert about China's threat to U.S. national security. Another editorial in the "Taipei Times" said the United States ought to deport the white-collar crime suspect Wang You-theng back to Taiwan. Meanwhile, "China Times" noted in an editorial that Taiwan authorities may lift a ban on ractopamine because of U.S. pressure. End summary

A) "Seven Years of Foreign Relations Manipulations Concluded Only by Saying [He Would] 'Endure Humiliations for the Nation'?"

The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (8/13):

"... In total, there will be 10 foreign visits by President Chen Shui-bian during his presidency, including the upcoming one. ... Despite of the attractive titles assigned to these visits, the destinations have never been the main purpose. Instead, which cities he can stop over in for transit on the way to and from the destinations is the main focus. After many incidents, Washington has begun to take the matter seriously and play along accordingly, making the issue a barometer for U.S.-Taiwan relations. It has even become a concrete indication of how much weight Chen Shui-bian carries in Washington.

"... This year the maneuvering of a proposed 'referendum on the bid to enter the United Nations under the name of Taiwan' has divided the mind-sets of Washington and Taipei even further. The transit treatment of [Chen] this time is one indicator.

"... Moreover, in recent years international opinion has focused more on whether Taiwan is a 'troublemaker' than on showing support and sympathy for Taiwan's isolated international position. Is it fair to get such an outcome for so many years of diplomatic effort? ..."

B) "Bush, Hu to Curb Taiwan Democracy"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation:

20,000] said in an editorial (8/13):

"In light of the continued support by Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian for the 'bottom-up' initiative by the Democratic Progressive Party for a national referendum on whether to join the United Nations under the name of 'Taiwan,' the United States government of rightist Republican President George W. Bush has launched a series of pressure moves ostensibly aimed at blocking the Taiwan government from crossing a so-called 'red line' drawn by Washington. ...

"Ironically, Washington has refrained from making any open criticism of the opposition Kuomintang, which is promoting a referendum which would precisely advocate 'returning' to the U.N. using the 'R.O.C' moniker.

"Most importantly, there is an essential difference between opinion polls and national citizen referendums. Opinion surveys involve only a handful of citizens, are made for policy reference and have no legal standing; citizen referendums, just as elections, permit all citizens to vote to express their opinion in a collective and legally binding expression of the will of the people. ...

"There is evidently a huge amount of misunderstanding between Taipei and Washington, which highlights the need for both sides to engage in constructive dialogue to strike a balance and the need for people in Washington to do some basic homework on direct democratic theory and Taiwan law. ...

"Given Beijing's apparently rising influence in Washington decision-making processes, we can expect PRC State Chairman and ruling Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Hu Jintao to push Bush to take other action besides downgrading President Chen's transit treatment. ...

"What is most important is for President Chen, the DPP leadership and DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh to stand firm together in emphasizing the significance of the right to referendum as an integral part of Taiwan's democratic progress and the need for the world democratic community to honor its own principles of human rights, self-determination of peoples and universality enshrined in the U.N. Charter. ..."

C) "China and the 'Nuclear Option'"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (8/11):

"... For all the U.S. government has said and done about reinforcing the security of the homeland against the terrorist threat, and for all of the hand-wringing that has accompanied illegal immigration and building fences on a desert border, the grim reality is that Americans are under increasing -- and increasingly acknowledged -- threat from a China that can say 'go to hell.'

"It is this threat, not the generally limited impact of terror cells, that has the potential to hit every American where it hurts the most. The frightening thing is that China appears to revel in a situation in which it is portrayed as powerful enough to hurt people on whom it relies for growth and accumulating wealth.

"No matter how much reform it may undertake, the Chinese government is proving itself incapable of shaking historical grudges -- and more than capable of repositioning those grudges from the enemies of the past to enemies of the future.

"So the question must be asked: How many warnings on Chinese aggression must the U.S. government receive before it talks and acts like it is dealing with a hostile power?"

D) "Wang You-theng: Face the Music"

In an editorial the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] said (8/12):

"... The United States is under no obligation to deport Wang [You-theng] to Taiwan if he is found not to have a case to answer.

"But, one way or another, he ought to be.

"Taiwan has been helpful when it comes to extraditing suspected criminals to the U.S. authorities -- and this has been in the absence of a formal extradition deal.

"If Wang is not tried for his alleged crimes in the place where he stands accused, then the country that allows him to avoid accountability will be party to a gross miscarriage of justice for the thousands of people who have lost their investments.

"The last thing the United States would want to do is inherit China's title as a safe haven for suspected embezzlers who can buy their way to freedom."

E) "Surrounded by Heavy Pressure?"

The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (8/11):

"It is said that there are as many as a thousand tons of U.S. pork stored in [Taiwan] customs. The reason for postponing their customs clearance is to wait for Taiwan to lift its ban on ractopamine. Can the Taiwan government sustain such heavy pressure from the United States?

"In fact, there are clear signs that Taiwan government's policy is recently being 'negotiated' toward the direction of a limited removal of the ban under pressure from both the U.S. government and Congress. The Council of Agriculture and the Department of Health have held so many meetings. If the meetings were not meant for lifting the ban, then why waste the mouth water and the tea water?"
...[Ed. Note: "wasting mouth water" is an idiom equivalent in English to "wasting one's breath."]

YOUNG